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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, June 2, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "LOCATING CONVENIENT CLOTHES CLOSETS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering and the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and Maud M. Wilson, Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station.

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As a thorough believer in more and better closets for every home, I have to confess that when I prowl around looking at new houses, the closets catch my eye long before the newest insulation or even air-conditioning makes its appeal.

On this point, Maud M. Wilson, of the Oregon State Agricultural Experiment Station, who has specialized on storage places for rural houses, says: "Lack of closet space and ill-planned closets are among the historic faults in house planning. Perhaps the designer does not appreciate housekeeping needs. Perhaps the house builder has tried to keep down costs." Or perhaps, I would say, nobody consulted the woman of the house.

I asked our Washington correspondent to find out whether the U. S. Department of Agriculture had anything helpful on the subject of clothes closets. She replies, "If your listeners want facts that will help in making considerable improvement, they might send for Farmers' Bulletin 1749-F, 'Modernizing Farmhouses.' If they just want to add a closet or two that the builder forgot, they can't call upon printed material issued by the Department, but here are some ideas gathered from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering."

Quoting further, "One problem in adding a clothing closet is finding a place to put it. Half a dozen practical possibilities suggest themselves, and several of them will be found in most homes.

"A closet is usually needed on the back porch, for farm workclothes that should not be hung with other garments. When space is at a premium inside a small house, a closet for a first-floor bedroom can often be taken from a porch without sacrificing much of its area.

"If you have two adjoining rooms, it is sometimes possible to take two feet or so off the whole side of one or the other along the common wall, build a new partition, and divide the space between into two closets, long and shallow, one for each bed-room. If the rod for garment hangers runs parallel to the door in each closet, the depth need be only enough to take the hangers at right angles. The clothes should not touch either the rear wall of the closet or the door when it is closed.

"Another good place to find closet room for clothes is in the second floor hall in many large old-fashioned houses. Sometimes there is a place at the end of such a hall that serves no useful purpose. If there's a window in it, so much the better for light and ventilation. A large central closet like this is fine for storing Sunday and visiting clothes for the whole family. If it has shelves for hats or suit boxes it will do for out-of-season storage too.

"It may be more convenient to build a closet along the side wall of a broad hall and divide it up into two or three compartments, one for each bedroom. This plan would help if the bed-rooms are small. Where there isn't quite enough room for closet doors to open wide, a flexible sliding door that pulls up from the bottom like a roll-top desk, is suggested.

"A good place for a clothes closet is sometimes revealed when a former bed-room is remodeled to make a bath-room. For example, a small room, 6 by 10 feet, is at least 3 feet longer than is necessary for a fully equipped bath-room. The extra space, which will be 3 by 6 feet, can be utilized in one of two ways: Part of it can be taken for a small hallway leading to the new bath-room, and the rest partitioned off to make a closet. Or, if there is some other way of entering the bath-room, the whole space will make a fine big closet opening out on the hall.

"Suggestion number four will apply to a room that seems to have too much necessary furniture in it to yield any floor space to a closet. Two corner closets will not use much space that would be good for anything else. They may be just triangular closets across the corners, but better still are two small square closets with the projecting corner cut off by a diagonal door. Inside there will be room for two shelves at right angles, and under one of them, a garment rod.

"There's a sixth possibility for locating a clothes closet in space otherwise wasted. That is under a flight of stairs. On the ground floor where a coat closet is usually needed the space below the risers is just the thing. Sometimes it is entered from the end, sometimes from one side. When it is entered on one side, a small second closet for the children, with hooks they can reach, might be made.

"Upstairs, a stairwell sometimes cuts off what would be the logical place to locate a bed-room closet, unless someone realizes that the floor of the closet does not have to be level with the room floor. By raising it a foot or so, enough head-room will be left on the stairs, and good closet space be found above it. Similarly, in rooms that are cut off by overhanging eaves, closets that extend under the sloping roof may be planned.

However, the agricultural engineers add a word of caution to those who may be growing too 'closet-minded.' Real efficiency may not necessarily follow from having a lot of little cubby-holes all over the house where things get tucked away and forgotten. It's one thing to have a place for everything and everything in its place, and quite another to plan storage places according to what needs storing. Having a closet in every room may waste space in a small house. The same needs may be adequately met if there is a closet for coats and wraps near the entrance, a few hooks at the back of the house for chore clothes, and a centrally located closet for garments not worn very often."

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